United Nations E/C.19/2004/5/Add.6

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
2 March 2004

Original: English

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Third session
New York, 10-21 May 2004
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Mandated areas

Information received from the United Nations system

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Summary

In its report on the second session (12-23 May 2003), the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues made recommendations concerning different fields of competence of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): culture, education, multicultural studies and water. The Forum also made recommendations to the organization and the National Commissions for UNESCO in order to improve the partnership between UNESCO and indigenous peoples.

The present report offers an overview of the action taken and planned by the sectors concerned in response to the Forum's recommendations. Moreover, as requested by the Forum, the document presents some updated information regarding cooperation and partnerships concerns.

* E/C.19/2004/5/Add.6.

04-25748 (E) 230304

I. Activities related to culture

"The Forum welcomes the initiative of UNESCO to draft a convention on intangible heritage and requests the participation, consultation and dialogue with indigenous peoples and with the Forum."[1].

1. The Intangible Heritage, Culture Sector, of the Division of Cultural Heritage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) appreciates the inclusion of this item in the recommendations. At its thirty-second session, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. In response to the request for dialogue between the Forum and UNESCO, Intangible Heritage proposes to have one or more informal meetings with the secretariat of the Forum in order to discuss safeguarding the heritage of indigenous peoples and the best way to ensure their participation in policy-making processes. This discussion could also focus on possibilities for consultation and cooperation between the Forum and Intangible Heritage, as well as community involvement regarding the implementation of the recently adopted Convention. Article 15 of the Convention asserts that States parties must ensure the broadest range of participation including, communities, groups and individuals.

2. The safeguarding of intangible heritage is linked to the protection and promotion of cultural diversity, which is a high priority for both UNESCO and indigenous peoples. Concerning the protection of cultural diversity, the General Conference, at its thirty-second session, invited the Director-General to submit to the General Conference at its next session, in 2005, a preliminary report setting forth its position with regard to regulatory problems and to the possible scope of the regulatory action proposed, accompanied by a first draft of a convention on the protection of the diversity of cultural contents and artistic expressions.

3. An international forum on local cultural expression and communication was jointly organized at Santo Domingo from 3 to 6 November 2003 by the Communication and Culture Sectors of UNESCO.

4. This meeting was organized within the framework of the current efforts of UNESCO to reinforce its programme in the field of local cultural expression through communication and information, to seek new synergies with partners operating at the local, regional and international levels and to identify innovative, concrete approaches for the organization's 2004-2005 programme, particularly for the implementation of a cross-cutting theme project on information and communication technologies for intercultural dialogue and diversity: developing communication capacities of indigenous people. The meeting gathered prominent scholars in the field and practitioners with a wide, hands-on experience in developing countries who discussed different aspects of cultural expression and formulated recommendations for future action. Two members of the Forum (from Guatemala and Peru) took part in this event. They addressed the meeting on the theme "Giving new voice to endangered cultures: identifying and expressing local content".

5. In its consultation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNESCO is developing a better understanding of the interlinkages between cultural diversity and biodiversity. The activities aim to clarify the relationships between natural resources management and various cultural aspects such as oral tradition,

language diversity and spirituality, thereby sensitizing decision makers to establish a linkage between cultural and environmental policies. As part of this special attention will be given to indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge of natural resources management.

II. Activities related to education

> **"The Forum recommends that the Economic and Social Council encourage ... specialized agencies ... to consider creating international indigenous universities. ... The Forum recommends that UNESCO hold a world forum on education and indigenous peoples with the participation of indigenous peoples that would contribute, inter alia, to enriching indigenous education concepts and pedagogical practices. ... The Forum recommends that UNESCO invite indigenous experts and specialists to participate in its education forums, congresses, conferences and meetings to ensure the recognition and contribution of indigenous scientific and technological knowledge."**[2]

6. In answer to those recommendations, the Education Sector of UNESCO organized a public debate on education at UNESCO headquarters in November 2003, and will bring the recommendations made by the Forum to the participants' attention. During this event Rodolfo Stavenhagen, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights and a keynote speaker, spoke on human rights and the fundamental freedoms of indigenous people. The Chairman of the Forum, also participated, with a presentation on quality education and indigenous peoples. In addition, a good practice publication is being prepared on indigenous education and will soon be available. The Director of the Higher Education Division has been notified of the Forum's recommendation regarding indigenous universities. The Education Sector also expresses its willingness to organize a parallel event on indigenous peoples and education within the framework of the third session of the Forum.

III. Activities related to social and human sciences

> **"The Forum recommends that the United Nations [including UNESCO] ... recognize the cultural rights of indigenous peoples ... [and] encourages the relevant specialized agencies to consider establishing an international center for multicultural and multiracial studies."**[3]

7. UNESCO currently has several important activities concerning multicultural societies. The UNESCO programme on international migration and multicultural policies supports research on multicultural policies and publishes the *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*. This programme also supports several international research networks regarding this issue and maintains web-based databases on linguistic rights and religious diversity.

IV. Activities related to the natural sciences

The Forum recommended that the Natural Sciences Sector of UNESCO take into account the Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration. In other general recommendations, although not necessarily to the sector, the Forum request consultations with indigenous peoples in cooperation with UNEP to examine the link between the environment and cultural diversity; and that more information regarding the specific work of UNESCO to ensure the protection of sacred sites be undertaken.[4]

8. In relation to this request the Natural Sciences Sector has elaborated a survey on environment and cultural diversity, which will be carried out by UNEP in close partnership with UNESCO. In this respect, two meetings took place, the first in Paris from 2 to 4 September 2003, and the second at Nairobi on 20 and 21 November 2003. The primary objectives are to assess the current state of work on the environment and cultural diversity, and to make recommendations for future developments in the field. Information sharing will be ensured through collaboration and consultation with a wide range of knowledge networks, including indigenous knowledge networks.

9. The culture-based environmental conservation initiative on natural sacred sites is being organized in collaboration with the World Conservation Union/World Commission on Protected Areas, the World Wide Fund for Nature International and the Rigoberta Menchu Tum Foundation. Previous meetings on the subject sought to explore the mechanisms for culture-based environmental conservation, using biosphere reserves and natural world heritage sites as well as non-protected areas.

10. UNESCO intends to develop further activities on the linkages between biological diversity and cultural diversity during the next biennium. Consultations and collaboration with indigenous communities are foreseen.

V. Activities related to youth

11. The Section for Youth, which coordinates the organization's youth activities, has as its principal objective to empower young people and encourage their full and equal citizenship in today's world. This objective directly concerns indigenous youth. In October 2003 the General Conference adopted a resolution institutionalizing the Youth Forum; it was decided that in the future the Youth Forum would meet on a regular basis, prior to the General Conference. The purpose of the Youth Forum is to bring together young people from varied cultural backgrounds, to exchange views, share experiences, reflect together and above all identify common preoccupations and problems. The participation of young indigenous representatives in this Youth Forum is encouraged through the National Commissions for UNESCO, which are responsible for designating the representatives (see para. 18). The National Commissions were informed by the UNESCO secretariat of the importance of collaborating with indigenous representatives. UNESCO considers young people as messengers of tolerance and intercultural understanding, joining the organization in its efforts to promote cultural diversity.

12. A youth-friendly version of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity is in preparation and will be available in three months. This version will

include comments inter alia from several international workshops where among others indigenous participants expressed their views in relation to the UNESCO Declaration. These comments enable us to better target their particular difficulties and aspirations.

VI. Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

13. The Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) project is a cross-cutting initiative that draws together expertise from all areas of UNESCO competence to address in a holistic manner the issue of indigenous knowledge. The LINKS project contributes to a number of recommendations from the Forum, in particular concerning economic and social development, environment and education.

14. UNESCO-LINKS has been establishing a network of demonstration projects to strengthen the role of indigenous knowledge and indigenous peoples in the processes of biodiversity governance and sustainable development.

15. A UNESCO-LINKS publication is under way to highlight the water issues raised by indigenous peoples at the Third World Water Forum at Kyoto in 2003. The publication is meant to sensitize decision makers about the necessity to strengthen the involvement of indigenous peoples in the next World Water Forum, scheduled for 2006.

16. UNESCO-LINKS is also paying particular attention to the impact of educational systems on the vitality of traditional knowledge and practices. Pilot projects are being developed to strengthen indigenous content in school programmes and to include indigenous pedagogical methods. UNESCO-LINKS is also developing learning tools that use new information and communication technologies such as CD-ROMS and DVDs to reinforce and revitalize the interest of indigenous youth in traditional knowledge.

VII. Information and communications technologies for intercultural dialogue and diversity: developing communication capacities of indigenous peoples

17. The cultural resources of indigenous peoples are increasingly at risk owing to the globalization process. This project aims at preserving these resources through access to information and communications technologies, and through the development of indigenous content. The key aspect of the project includes the fostering of intercultural dialogue between marginalized indigenous peoples and other groups both in urban and rural settings, through the use of information and communications technologies that will contribute to enhancing indigenous peoples' cultural identities and fighting discrimination. This project will also allow indigenous peoples to acquire greater skill in using information and communications technologies, thereby creating new opportunities for income-generating activities. The goals UNESCO hopes to reach by incorporating this project include, the training of indigenous community leaders in information and communications technology use; the production of indigenous cultural content for television, radio and new media; and awareness raised at the national and international levels about

indigenous creativity and about the importance of cultural diversity expressed through information and communications technologies.

VIII. Partnership concerns

> **"The Forum recommends that the National Commissions for UNESCO work closely with indigenous experts and representatives with expertise in education, science, culture and communication [to increase the participation of indigenous peoples in UNESCO activities]. ... The Forum recommends that UNESCO bring together indigenous experts and specialists to constitute an international network which integrates [the fields of] culture, education, science and communication in order to forge a partnership between UNESCO and indigenous peoples."**[5]

18. UNESCO circulated a letter to the National Commissions for UNESCO regarding the recommendations made by the Forum. The National Commissions for UNESCO are unique within the United Nations system. They are composed of associates from the intellectual and scientific communities and form a vital link between those communities and UNESCO. The National Commissions are also responsible for facilitating outreach between UNESCO and civil society. There is a UNESCO National Commission in most States members and associate States members of UNESCO.

19. UNESCO shall also cooperate with the National Commissions to establish a roster of indigenous experts in the field of culture to facilitate cooperation between indigenous communities, the National Commissions and UNESCO. UNESCO headquarters encourages cooperation with the members of the Forum and the Forum's secretariat. The organization encourages indigenous peoples to create UNESCO clubs via the National Commissions. UNESCO clubs are composed of members of civil society from all backgrounds who work within their national boundaries to promote UNESCO ideals. They aim to influence social decision-making through awareness of global and local issues.

20. UNESCO shall urge the National Commissions to invite a member of the Forum to the regional consultation, which will be held in May and July 2004, to share information regarding the Forum and its mandate and plans of action.

21. In order to provide updated information concerning partnership concerns, new developments related to UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors and Artists for Peace are presented herewith.

22. In addition to Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1992) Rigoberta Menchu Tum who was designated Goodwill Ambassador in June 1996, two new indigenous personalities were recently designated by the UNESCO Director-General.

23. Venezuelan model and actress Patricia Velasquez was designated UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2003. She was born in La Guajira in 1971, one of the poorest regions in Venezuela. From a modest background, Patricia had planned to work in the oil industry when, by chance she was spotted by a model scout and launched into a modelling career. She founded the Wayuu Taya Foundation in 2003 to help the indigenous people of her region. The Foundation's goal is to develop educational programmes focused on nutrition, health care and basic job training. The Foundation is also committed to helping native people preserve their cultural heritage.

24. Scott Momaday was designated UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2004 for his action for the preservation and development of Native American cultural identity and his devoted efforts to instil in young Native Americans an active concern about their ancestral heritage through the Buffalo Trust. He is a Kiowa poet, playwright and storyteller. In 1969, he was awarded the Pulitzer prize. Currently he is Professor of Humanities at the University of Arizona. He is also the founder and chairman of the Buffalo Trust, a non-profit foundation for the preservation and the restoration of Native American cultural heritage.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 23* (E/2003/43), chap. I, para. 102.

[2] Ibid., paras. 110, 113 and 114.

[3] Ibid., para. 109.

[4] Ibid. See, e.g., paras. 48, 53 and 56.

[5] Ibid., paras. 104 and 105.